

LOS GATOS
RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES
FOR PRE-1941 STRUCTURES

PREPARED FOR
THE TOWN OF LOS GATOS
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LOS GATOS RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

These residential design guidelines are intended to assist Los Gatos property owners considering building alterations, remodeling, or new construction of residences. They are also intended to assist the Town in evaluating proposed projects. The primary purpose is to guide property owners towards successful solutions to their needs and to maintain the existing positive physical qualities and character of the residential neighborhoods in Los Gatos. It will assist in determining whether a new building, or an expansion of an existing one, is visually compatible with the character of its neighborhood. The basic premise is that existing structures should be retained and rehabilitated while maintaining the structure's integrity. New construction and any alterations should contribute to the unique existing urban qualities of the Town.

B. Application / Enforcement

1. Residential Historic District Boundaries

These guidelines apply to all properties within the boundaries of designated Historic Preservation Overlay Zones, Landmark Sites, and to all residential buildings constructed before 1941. The provisions of the Historic District Ordinances takes precedent whenever there may be a conflict between the Design Guidelines and the Historic District Ordinances.

2. Legal Basis of these Guidelines

All new construction and any exterior modification to existing residences within the Landmark and Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, and Historically Designated Sites shall be in conformance with these Design Guidelines which were adopted by the Town Council on October 5, 1992.

3. Related Requirements

All new construction shall conform to the requirements of the Los Gatos building, plumbing, electrical, and mechanical codes and requirements of the

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State of California, e.g., Alquist-Priolo Act; Title 24 of the California Administrative Code (including the State Historic Building Code).

4. Requirements for Review of Applications

Requirements for review of proposed residential projects are as stipulated in the Los Gatos Town Code.

C. Critical Residential Issues

Los Gatos is confronted with several critical issues with respect to its existing housing stock. Historically, Los Gatos was primarily a summer resort; housing stock consisting primarily of weekend or summer retreats. The variety of styles and housing types built over time enhance quality of life in Los Gatos. The neighborhoods have essentially retained most of this character, but they are now confronted with economic growth and expansion from Silicon Valley. Because of the transition into a suburban community of permanent residents, housing requirements have changed. Remodeling existing buildings and adding new housing in existing neighborhoods requires thoughtful planning.

D. Neighborhood Character

1. Significance

The Town of Los Gatos has determined that it would like to preserve the existing town ambience, specifically the historic character of its neighborhoods. Retention of this character enriches the physical environment of the Town. In order to protect neighborhood character we must first define it and, when possible, quantify the definitions. This section focuses on the physical and visual aspects of neighborhood character. Two of the most important aspects of neighborhood character, change and diversity, are taken into consideration.

2. Definition

Physical aspects of neighborhood character are described by the following categories: context, site, form, rhythm, and treatment of surfaces. Context is a combination of elements which broadly define the neighborhood, but are

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not site specific. Site refers to the relationship between the built form and the land. Form is the shape, size, massing, and general composition of structures. Rhythm refers to a combination of elements of the form which break the mass into smaller elements which, when combined with neighboring elements, create a rhythm on the street. Treatment of surfaces is the material and resulting textures on the various planes of the structure.

3. Los Gatos Neighborhood Character

Los Gatos neighborhoods consist primarily of detached single family houses with open yards on all sides. Most of the historic housing was not developed in architecturally uniform tracts, but rather as individual dwellings constructed irregularly over a long span of years, with later buildings unfilled among the earlier ones. A given neighborhood is generally harmonious in scale and rhythm, yet diverse in architectural style. Preserving and promoting this scale and diversity is important to the preservation and enhancement of the neighborhood character.

II. GENERAL GUIDELINES

A. Philosophy

These guidelines establish criteria for neighborhood compatibility and historic rehabilitation. Compliance with these guidelines does not necessarily guarantee a successful project. Rather the intent is to assure neighborhood compatibility. A thoughtful and sensitive design, and quality of construction and materials are also important to project success.

The Design Guidelines do not prescribe specific architectural styles; rather they encourage property owners to determine the special character and its accompanying features inherent in their particular residence. Numerous appropriate design solutions exist for established neighborhoods. The Design Guidelines do not encourage historical imitation or dramatic change from the existing context. The primary consideration is that a proposed design

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consciously reflect the scale, rhythm, and continuity of the existing neighborhood to create a harmonious fit that will enhance the quality of the neighborhood.

The intent of these Design Guidelines is to aid property owners and their designers throughout all phases of project design. The Guidelines were also prepared for neighbors, community groups, and the Planning Commission, and Planning Department staff and the Historic Preservation Committee for use in evaluation and recommendation of proposed projects. Professional consultation is recommended for existing structures, and development within sensitive areas, for a successful and appropriately designed and detailed building.

In general additions to existing structures should be subtly distinguished from the original building. New construction should also relate in a sensitive, positive manner to the existing surrounding town fabric, and its siting. Complete buildout to the boundaries of existing zoning is not necessarily acceptable.

B. Character-Defining Features

Rather than speaking of "styles" which imply adherence to certain abstract ideal patterns, these guidelines address "character-defining features" because actual historic buildings hardly ever conform exactly to styles, and each structure should be respected and treated on its own merits. Therefore, before planning alterations to a historic building, look at it carefully and analyze what contributes to its character. You will probably find some or all of the following, and more:

- siting, height, and setbacks
- materials
- ornamentation
- roof shape and coverings
- projections: dormers, bay windows, porches, stairs, etc.
- indentations, porches, side jogs, etc.
- windows: size, proportions, method of opening, sash materials, trim
- porches: size, relation to main roof shape and design of post(s), design of railing, height above ground.

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- entry: relation to main house wall, door design, trim
- stairs: location, direction, design of railing, materials
- chimney: height, location, materials
- brick work or stone work: color, size, and texture of units; profile, color and composition of mortar
- foundation or basement: difference (if any) in treatment from main house walls
- garage and its relation to the house

For examples of the differences between houses in their character-defining features see Section IX.

C. Density and Variety

Density and variety in a neighborhood are critical to the qualities that make it unique and desirable. It is the town policy to strive to maintain existing densities, concentration of associated activities and housing values, and to mitigate overuse or degradation of the existing environment. Density is primarily controlled through zoning, but it should also be considered by the property owner and designer.

Variety results from a series of individual projects built at various times. Variety is important in maintenance of an established yet diverse and dynamic quality for a neighborhood. It is important for new structures and alterations to conform to the established proportions, siting, scale, rhythm, materials of the existing building or neighborhood. It is also important for new structures and alterations to maintain their own subtly individual character and definition. Strikingly "modern" design is discouraged in historic neighborhoods; new buildings and alterations should either blend in inconspicuously or match existing buildings.

D. Pre-Design Research

Prior to commencement of work the existing conditions of a structure or a neighborhood should be investigated to determine the following:

- If the building or neighborhood is historically significant

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- Which features are character-defining
- Which elements are original
- Which previous modifications are appropriate
- Reversibility or ease of redesign from an unsuccessful modification

III. CONTEXT

A. Treatment - Additions

- The character of any addition or alteration should be in keeping with and subordinate to the integrity of the original structure.
- The established scale, form and proportions of the original structure should be respected in new additions.
- The existing built forms, components and materials should be reinforced.

B. New Construction in Historic Districts

- Replacement of an existing character-defining or historic structure with a new structure is strongly discouraged.
- Replacement of a non-contributing structure is acceptable.
- New construction should be in keeping with the existing neighborhood.
- The established contextual patterns and rhythms should be respected.
- It is perfectly acceptable that a new "style" be introduced, if it is in keeping with the neighborhood. Historically that has occurred throughout the development of the Town of Los Gatos.
- New construction and additions shall match or be subtly distinguished from existing historic structures.
- New structures should not create a false sense of the historical development of the district.

IV. THE SITE

Siting is the relationship between the building form and the land. It is the relationship between the new construction and the existing structure. Setbacks are the distance between the structure's edges and the property lines. Setbacks rear, side, and front are both zoned and implied. These setbacks define and create the block's rhythm.

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The space created by setbacks becomes the open space. This space forms the transition between separate private spaces and between private and public spaces. The location and size of any proposed alteration or new construction must be determined through analysis of the existing neighborhood building configuration. The size and topography of the site will dictate a specific response as will the surrounding context. The house's position, setbacks, and yards will all be important in maintenance of the streetscape, scale, rhythm, and continuity of the existing neighborhood.

A. Treatment - Additions to Structures Built Before 1941

- Do not demolish historic feature, characteristics or materials.
- Do not add roof top additions where the roof is of historic significance.
- Reduce the size of the addition with respect to the original structure.
- Site the addition in the least conspicuous place. In many cases this is a rear or side elevation; only rarely is it a rooftop.
- With historically significant structures, design the addition to match or be subtly distinguishable from the original structure.

B. Treatment - New Construction and Additions

- Conform new structures to the existing and/or required setbacks and replace the "footprint" of the original structures if any.
- Respect the established site patterns and harmonize with neighboring buildings and existing topography. Exceptions might occur at corners, or where unusual existing condition or neighboring structures creates a special condition.
- Respect the street pattern created by open space.

V. FORM

Form is the shape, size, and the general composition of a structure. The volume and mass are the spatial arrangements, bulk, and three dimensional form of a structure. Mass and volume create shadows. The scale and proportion of a

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structure are the size and dimensions of the building's components relative to one another and relative to the surrounding structures.

A. Treatment - Additions to Historic Structures

- Design additions so their volume, mass, scale and proportions are subservient to and compatible with the existing structures.
- When working on historic buildings, design additions to match or be subtly distinguishable from the original.
- Make additions compatible in scale and proportion to the existing structure.

B. Treatment - New Construction

- When a prevailing scale or proportion exists on a block, make additions compatible with it.
- When a new project has more square footage than the surrounding structures, reduce the scale of the structure with sensitive design treatments. Setbacks, overhangs, bay windows, changes in roof slopes, and facade ornament are all methods for reducing the scale of a structure.

VI. COMPONENTS

The components listed are major design elements which define neighborhood character. While treated separately under these Guidelines, they in fact combine to create the style of the building.

A. Entry

The entry is usually the main focus of the building. The entry is often articulated by overhangs or recesses. This articulation, the entry location contribute to the composition and proportion of the structure.

TREATMENT - ALTERATIONS

- Identify and retain significant entry features
- Respect the original significant entry features when adding new elements.
- Identify and harmonize with existing entry rhythm on the street.

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TREATMENT - NEW CONSTRUCTION

- Address the scale, proportion, and composition of the surrounding structures, without duplicating the exact historic ornament.
- Respect the existing patterns created by shades and shadows along the street.

B. Windows

Windows contribute to the composition, proportion, ornament. Windows should not be replaced with new windows which are unsympathetic to the existing structure, drastically affecting the appearance of the structure.

TREATMENT - ALTERATIONS

- Identify, retain and repair existing character-defining windows whenever possible.
- Replace only the deteriorated portions windows rather than the entire window.
- Where full replacement is required, replace in kind using the same type, size and material.
- Do not use aluminum slider windows.
- Avoid aluminum sash for screens and storm windows.
- Place greenhouse windows where they are not seen from the street.

TREATMENT - NEW CONSTRUCTION

- Use new windows which are compatible in proportion, scale, material, and ornament to existing.
- Do not use aluminum slider windows.

C. Bay Windows

D. Garages

Often the largest element on the ground floor, the garage, by virtue of its size, plays a major role in the composition of a structure.

TREATMENT-ALTERATIONS

- Identify, retain and repair existing character-defining garage doors.

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- Replace only the deteriorated portions of the garage door rather than the entire door.
- Where full replacement is required, replace in kind using the same type, size and material.

TREATMENT - NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

- Where possible, design garage to be attached and at the rear of the lot.
- If attached, design garage entry on other than the front facade if possible.
- Design for a minimum garage door width.
- Reduce the perceived size by using ornament or recessing the door.
- Treatment should be in keeping with the main house.

E. Roof

The roof refers to the type of roof slope, and the decorative features including dormers, cornices, eaves, and fascia. It also refers to ornament including cresting, and cupolas.

TREATMENT - ALTERATION

- Identify, retain and repair existing character-defining rooflines and roof components whenever possible.
- Where full replacement is required and the original material is character defining, replace in kind using the same material.
- Do not use shake shingle.
- Where water penetration occurs, determine if failure is a result of design or lack of maintenance. Where the design has failed, redesign as inconspicuously as possible.

TREATMENT - NEW CONSTRUCTION

- Identify any roofline patterns along the street.
- Design the roofline of an addition to be subservient to and compatible with the existing roofline.
- Design new structures to be compatible with identified patterns where they occur.

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- Where new construction is larger in mass than existing construction, use rooflines and roof features such as dormers, to break down the mass and bring the scale down to be compatible with the neighboring structures.

F. Chimneys

Chimneys often contribute to the overall character of a residence. At the same time unreinforced masonry chimneys can create hazardous earthquake conditions.

TREATMENT - ALTERATION

- Identify, retain and reinforce, tie back or brace significant chimneys.
- Rebuild missing chimneys, reinforcing masonry where possible.
- When existing chimneys are rebuilt, clad chimneys in the original material or an approved visually compatible substitute material.
- Do not paint unpainted brick.

TREATMENT - NEW CONSTRUCTION

- Respect existing street pattern in new design.

G. Porches

Porches and their associated railings, cornices, rooflines, overhangs, and supporting members are often an important character defining feature of a structure, style, or neighborhood.

TREATMENT - ALTERATIONS

- Identify, retain, and repair character-defining elements of porches.
- Replace only deteriorated portions, rather than the entire porch.
- Replace in kind using the same material, profiles and details as original.

TREATMENT - NEW CONSTRUCTION

- Design new porches to harmonize with the setbacks, mass, scale and materials of the neighborhood.
- On historic buildings, restore missing porches based on sufficient historic documentation and evidence, or create a new compatible design.

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- Design porch enclosures to be recessed so original porch design remains apparent.
- Design details to be recessed so enclosure may be removed and the original porch restored at a future time.

H. Stairs

Stairs often combine with the entry or porch and are an important design feature.

TREATMENT - ALTERATIONS

- Identify, retain and repair significant stairs.
- In the event a stair is to be totally replaced, replace in kind using the same design and materials as the original.

TREATMENT - NEW CONSTRUCTION

- Identify and respect patterns, if any, the stairs create on the street.
- Design new stairs to be compatible in materials, proportions, and direction of other stairs on the street.

I. Fences

Fences enclose, thus define, outdoor space and property lines.

TREATMENT - EXISTING

- Identify and repair character defining fences.
- When replacing missing elements where original design is known, recreate original, or create a simplified design using the same materials, proportions and composition as the original.

TREATMENT - NEW CONSTRUCTION

- In front yards, use fences only where they are characteristic of the neighborhood.
- Respect existing gate, setbacks, height, and proportion of existing openings.
- Provide a high-quality finish and detail on neighboring fences.

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VII. SURFACE TREATMENT AND ORNAMENTATION

While the volume, mass, and components define the general shape and rhythm of a neighborhood, the ornamentation and details are the fine grain elements which define its quality.

A. Surface Treatment

The surface product is defined by material (such as wood, brick or stucco), its form (such as boards, bricks, shingles), and its finish (smooth or textured).

TREATMENT - ALTERATIONS

- Identify, retain and repair existing character defining surface treatment.
- Use new surface product compatible with the existing material in material, form and detail.

TREATMENT - NEW CONSTRUCTION

- Match surface or use compatible surface treatment.
- Do not use "imitation" materials such as styrofoam which appears to be concrete, stucco which appears to be stone, masonite or vinyl which appears to be wood.

B. Ornamentation

Ornamentation consists of building features such as rustication or cornices, treatment and trim at openings, and surface applied relief.

TREATMENT - ALTERATION

- Identify, retain and repair character-defining ornamentation.
- Where ornamentation is damaged beyond repair or missing, replace in kind or with an appropriate substitute material and match detail.

TREATMENT - NEW CONSTRUCTION

- Respect the scale, proportion, texture, of the existing ornamentation.
- New structures should not create a false sense of the historical development of the district.
- Use the same or higher quality materials in new construction.

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VIII. LANDSCAPING

New landscaping should respect distinctive landscape elements.

TREATMENT - ALTERATIONS

- Respect and retain the character defining landscape and planting whenever possible.

TREATMENT - NEW CONSTRUCTION

- Respect tree and planting patterns.
- Equal or exceed quality and density of landscaping.

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IX. EXAMPLES OF CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

Roof:	Clay pantiles, shape, pitch, variety of levels
Walls:	Large plain areas, stucco, texture of stucco
Chimney:	Tapering shape, stucco to match walls
Windows:	Wood, double-hung, slightly recessed, simple sill and moldings, proportions of height to width, grouping/placement
Massing:	Tree-dimensional appearance of house in several sections of varying, shapes, and contrast with chimney
Entrance:	(not visible in photo)
Height:	One-story front, second story set back
Relation to Site:	Far back from street and from side lot lines

NOTE: Rear is probably an addition (different windows, roof material, no variety in massing)



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Roof:	Partly gabled and partly truncated pyramid
Windows:	Wood, tall and narrow proportions, double-hung, plain board surrounds, sills with embossed near-brackets
Massing:	Picturesque three-dimensional massing: L-shaped plan, roof partly gabled, partly truncated pyramid, projecting porch
Surface:	Surface treatment variety: Hexagonal shingles on gable-end, wide rustic on main house body, vertical tongue-and groove base, decorative motif over facade window pair
Porch:	Size and proportions, roof independent of main one and nearly flat, spindle-work frieze, multi-notched square posts with chamfered tops and cutwork brackets
Gable end:	Pent roof at bottom, molded eaves with simple bargeboard, apex ornament, hexagonal shingles



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- Roof: Very low pitch, gable end to front, slightly projecting rafters, overhanging eaves
- Gable vents: Vertical decoration at apex of gables
- Windows: Wood, double-hung (mostly), facade ones with short upper sash and nearly square proportions, side ones with each sash nearly square, plain board surrounds and simple sills
- Siding: Wide rustic
- Height: One short story without basement



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- Roof: Shape, pitches, fine-grained surface texture
- Windows: Wood, double-hung, segmental arch top
- Front bay window: Location on facade, flat roof below main roof and its cornice, three sides and their angles to each other, long and narrow window proportions, two windows on face, colonettes between windows, moldings, paneling, cornice
- Side bay window: Location, shape, relation to roof, window proportion and trim
- Porch: Inset in corner of main building volume, simple posts with cut corners (chamfered), lintel shape, size, proportions
- Siding: Wood, wide channel rustic
- Height: One tall story over high basement
- Relation to Site: Set well back on lot and in from lot sides, detached garage at rear, driveway at right, bulkhead wall at sidewalk



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Roof:	Shape, pitch, overhang, projecting rafters, knee braces, fine-grained materials
Windows:	Wood, double-hung, wide and plain board surrounds with top board extended, proportions different on front from sides, short upper sash in front
Porch:	Inset under attic, floor, railings and their nature, side openings, height and depths, symmetry
Porch Columns:	Shape, pairing, detailing capitals, bases, relation to front porch wall
Facade org.:	Symmetry, entry at center, sidelights (narrow windows) flanking each opening
Siding:	Wood, wide clapboards (overlapping, slightly slanted)
Height:	One-and-one half-stories
Relation to Site:	Front and side setbacks, main floor height above ground, stone wall at sidewalk, detached garage at rear driveway at left
Special Features:	Attic window ensemble with center one taller, simply balustraded balcony with knee braces



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XI. GLOSSARY

Apex. Top of a gable end triangle.

Baluster. The vertical support piece of a railing.

Balustrade. A railing with frequent vertical supports.

Barge board. Plain or fancy decorative element hung from and parallel to the sloping eaves of a gable end.

Bay window. A group of windows projecting out from the main house wall, usually with three faces, sometimes (typically 1870s) with five faces.

Brace. Three boards outlining a triangle to support an overhang or horizontal, usually with little or no decoration.

Bracket. An essentially triangular piece, usually much decorated, which supports an overhang or horizontal.

Capital. Top of a column, usually decorative.

Casement window. Hinged sash that pushes out horizontally like an awning.

Chamfered. A corner cut across rather than rounded [sketch].

Character-defining features.

Clapboard. Overlap horizontal siding of tapered profile so that the lower edges flare out. Usually about 2 inches between edges, but sometimes 6-8.

Compatibility.

Continuity.

Cornice. The upper horizontal element of a building.

Double-hung windows. Two sash that open by sliding past each other vertically.

Fabric. The existing material of a building.

Facade. Front face of a building.

Gable. Two-slope roof form with a triangular end that may face front or side.

Hip roof. Four-slope roof of pyramid shape.

Massing. The three-dimensional form or shape of a building.

Newel. The end post of a railing.

Pantiles. Ceramic (or imitation ceramic) tiles of half-cylinder shape, overlapped and underlapped to cover a roof [sketch].

Pent roof. Subsidiary roof attached to side of building and usually only for decoration.

Pitch. The degree of slope of a roof.

Pyramidal roof. Four-slope roof of pyramid shape, alternately called hip roof.

Rhythm.

Rustic. Overlap siding run horizontally so that a horizontal groove appears about every 6 inches on an otherwise smooth vertical face [sketches: channel rustic profile, V-groove rustic profile, maybe Colonial Revival rustic profile (alternating wide and narrow)].

Scale.

Setback.

Shed roof. One-slope roof.

Veneer. A surface material that conceals the structure beneath.

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